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ABSTRACT

This brochure reviews a White House Executive Order on tribal colleges and universities that sets in motion a comprehensive effort to increase public and private resources and partnerships to strengthen the infrastructure of these institutions. Currently more than 350 degree and 180 vocational programs give students an opportunity to earn two-year, baccalaureate, and master's degrees. Goals of this Executive Order include: (1) building recognition and participation by fully recognizing tribal colleges as accredited institutions; (2) ensuring federal support of tribal colleges on an ongoing basis and establishing mechanisms for increasing access to federal resources; (3) strengthening educational achievement by promoting access to high-quality educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged students; (4) nurturing native culture and language; (5) encouraging innovative links between tribal colleges, early childhood programs, and elementary and high schools; and (6) supporting national education goals to ensure achievement and lifelong learning. Corporations, foundations, federal agencies, and others are encouraged to support partnerships; help build infrastructure; assist with planning, development, administrative systems, and communications; create K-12 links between tribal colleges and their organizations through curriculum development, summer academies, and systemic change; provide technical assistance; and use technology to help tribal colleges develop their own capacities. (CH)

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"Education is the only lasting means for ending poverty on reservations, and among Indian people."
—Crow Elder

Tribal Colleges and Universities Guide the Way

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White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities

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New Hope at the Federal Level: The Executive Order on Tribal Colleges and Universities

Tribal Colleges are culturally-based; they focus on local economic needs and address the whole person: mind, body, spirit and family. More than 26,000 students from 250 federally recognized tribes now attend these institutions created by American Indians for American Indians. On reservations, where unemployment rates exceed 50 percent, these schools often provide the only hope for gaining the education and skills needed to enter the modern workplace.

For decades, Tribal College leaders have been working to create opportunities afforded to other higher education institutions. Today, through the Executive Order, the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities is leading a comprehensive effort to increase public and private resources and partnerships to support them. The ultimate goal: to strengthen the infrastructure of these institutions by demonstrating the stake that all Americans have in their continued success.

The 15-member President's Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges are guiding implementation of the Executive Order.

The Tribal Colleges offer more than 350 degrees and 180 vocational programs. While all give students the opportunity to earn two-year degrees, several offer baccalaureate degrees and some offer master's programs. On average, 75 to 85 percent of Tribal College graduates go on to earn a four-year degree, or become employed in the local community.

Still, the struggle continues. Despite unmatched success in student retention, matriculation, and job placement, many Tribal Colleges still operate in castoff buildings and facilities in disrepair. Most work to keep their doors open in the poorest, most isolated counties in America. Many serve reservations where more than 50 percent live in poverty. Virtually all serve as the best and only hope for students who commute 16 to 150 miles per day in the quest to earn their way off the cycle of welfare and dependence.

The colleges face financial challenges that would bankrupt most mainstream institutions. Unlike other public colleges, Tribal Colleges receive little or no funding from state governments. Legislation passed in 1978, the Tribally Controlled College and University Assistance Act, authorizes federal aid for core operations, which translates to $6,000 per Indian student today. But the actual appropriation is only about half of that amount.

Technology, too, is important. It is at once their greatest challenge and greatest opportunity. In recent years, several Tribal Colleges have done an extraordinary job of educating students across the boundaries of time and distance. This success is born of necessity. Bay Mills Community College in Michigan's Upper Peninsula serves all 11 tribes in Michigan as well as students in 17 additional states. One of our greatest challenges is to boost the technological capacity of all the colleges for the century to come.

"Today, tribal colleges are offering [the reservations and] tribal communities the chance to build knowledge, skills, confidence and pride in a way not possible for non-Indian institutions to offer. By recognizing and rewarding the accomplishments and contributions of these unique institutions, the nation will help them to do even more—and everyone will share in their success."

Native American Colleges: Progress and Prospects
A report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

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Leading the Way:

The White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities:

- Increasing Resources
- Advocating and Educating
- Building Partnerships
- Coordinating Executive Order

Goals of the Executive Order include:

- **Building Recognition and Participation**
- **Increasing Resources**
- **Strengthening Educational Achievement**
- **Nurturing Native Culture and Language**
- **Building Bridges in the Education System**
- **Supporting the National Education Goals**

For many people, the broken desks, rickety typewriters and dilapidated trailers that characterized the first Tribal College classrooms of 1968 might have been symbols of the educational and economic struggles faced for centuries by American Indians. To a determined group of tribal leaders, however, they were the stepping stones to a destiny of self-sufficiency and achievement that would strengthen Indian nations for generations to come.

Today's Tribal Colleges and Universities are the embodiment of that destiny.

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What We Can Do To Support Tribal Colleges and Universities

- **Partnerships:**
- **Sustainability:**
- **Internal Operations:**
- **Linkage Programs:**
- **Technical Assistance:**
- **Technology:**